

# EXECUTIVE REPORT

## Summary

The Plan outlines many of the steps proposed during the next five years to provide for the stewardship of the natural resources of the Rock Creek Fish and Wildlife Cooperative Management Area (Rock Creek Reserve). The Plan proposes the continuation of current management programs and policies for the Buffer Zone (which include the Rock Creek Reserve), and differs from these programs mainly with the inclusion of these proposed actions:

- expansion of the Rock Creek Reserve from 800 acres to 1700 acres;
- development of an access and recreation study;
- development of a contaminants study for Rock Creek Reserve;
- assessment and determination of feasibility to stabilize all, or part of, the Lindsay Ranch;
- within the site-wide annual vegetation management plan, provide increased emphasis for noxious weed management, including increased biological controls;
- monitoring of water quality and quantity for Rock Creek; including determination of current and minimum in-stream flows; and
- introductions of sensitive, native faunal species (and removal of non-natives) and consideration of federally-listed plant species (in accordance with approved recovery plans) into Rock Creek Reserve.

The Plan does not preclude or compromise the accomplishment of the Site's current cleanup and closure mission, or any future considerations for the Site. The Plan has been developed through cooperation with the appropriate regulatory agencies and the public.

## Purpose

The Plan guides implementation of the 1998 Natural Resources Management Policy (NRMP) for Rocky Flats from 2001 through 2006 (or until closure) for the land and natural resources of the Rock Creek Reserve and helps ensure compliance with environmental laws and regulations. The Plan helps provide the continued protection and conservation of the area's unique natural resources.

## Scope

Rock Creek Reserve (Fig. 2) was established in May of 1999 in recognition of the area's biological significance. Although still under ownership of the DOE, Rock Creek Reserve will be co-managed with the Service as part of a cooperative agreement signed by these two agencies in 1999. The need for an integrated natural resources management plan was recognized and included as a requirement in the cooperative agreement. The Plan discusses management tools and options specifically for Rock Creek Reserve. The management options outlined in the Plan could be used (in conjunction with other, resource-specific management plans) to help manage the natural resources for other portions of, or the entire Site after the scheduled clean up is complete and if future land ownership/uses are compatible. The Plan is not intended to be a re-use plan, or any kind of decision document for the use of Rocky Flats after closure. Those issues will be addressed through other public participation processes.

The Plan is developed as a tool to cooperatively manage natural and cultural resources under the current federal ownership and land use conditions. Any significant changes to the current conditions will be addressed as a supplement to the Plan or in a separate document if necessary. All management strategies

in this Plan will be consistent with the Rocky Flats current mission of facilities demolition and site remediation resulting in closure.

The Plan utilizes basic criteria for protecting and enhancing natural resources using watershed, landscape, and ecosystem perspectives, consistent with the current Rocky Flats mission and Service goals. Provisions of the Plan apply to all management entities at Rocky Flats. For the purposes of this document those entities are currently the DOE (including its contractors) and the Service. The Plan provides the management goals and guidance for Rock Creek Reserve for future specific natural resource management plans, such as noxious weed management plans, cultural resource management plans, etc.

Because of policies or projects defined as federal undertakings, the Plan was developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA requires public involvement and consideration of reasonable alternatives and environmental impacts of the alternatives of federal actions, including the proposed action. NEPA analysis of reasonable alternatives (including no action) is incorporated within the Plan to achieve that goal. Some future natural resource management projects may require additional NEPA analysis if they do not fall within the scope of significance criteria established in this Plan/Environmental Assessment.

The goals, objectives and management principles presented in the plan are a result of discussions that occurred over several years concerning the possible management options for the buffer zone, and subsequent public and agency meetings and mailings. This process is documented in the administrative record for development of the Plan and is available upon request at the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site.

## **Environmental Compliance**

The Plan helps DOE and the Service to comply with federal and State laws, most notably laws associated with environmental documentation, wetlands, endangered species, water quality, and wildlife management in general.

The Plan has the signatory approval of the Service. This signature approval includes agreement that the Plan complies with the Endangered Species Act of 1973 for activities in the Rock Creek Reserve area. The Service's review of the Plan constitutes informal consultation with regard to the Endangered Species Act. The Plan facilitates compliance with applicable laws and regulations, including:

- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended through 1992)
- Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978
- Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990
- Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974
- Clean Water Act of 1978
- Clean Air Act (as amended through 1990)
- Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act
- Federal Land Policy and Management Act 1979

Protection of Wetlands: Amends Executive Order 11990  
Migratory Bird Treaty Act  
Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species, 1999  
Colorado Noxious Weed Act

Other natural resources management regulations and legislation relevant to this Plan are listed below.

Public Law 85-624- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act  
Public Law 89-669- Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act  
Public Law 86-70- Bald Eagle Protection Act, as amended  
Public Law 93-366- Non-game Act  
Public Law 92-522- Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972  
Public Law 90-583- Noxious Plant Control Act  
Title 16 U.S. Code 590 - Soil Conservation  
Title 16 U.S. Code 1271- National Trails System Act of 1968  
Executive Order 11991- Protection and Enhancement of Environmental Quality  
Executive Order 12898 – Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority  
Populations and Low Income Populations  
Executive Order 11990 – Protection of Wetlands  
Executive Order 11988 – Floodplain Management

## **Relationship to the Rocky Flats Mission**

From 1952 to 1992, the mission of the Rocky Flats Plant was to produce nuclear weapons components from plutonium, uranium, beryllium and stainless steel. Among other things, the Plant produced plutonium triggers for nuclear warheads and recycled old triggers. Manufacturing work was conducted in the approximately 400-acre Industrial Area. The Industrial Area is surrounded by an approximately 6,000-acre Buffer Zone. The Buffer Zone has been left largely undisturbed over the years, resulting in preservation of vegetation and fauna, including a federally-listed threatened species, the Preble's meadow jumping mouse. The Rock Creek Reserve is located in the northern part of the Buffer Zone and is considered at this time to be essentially uncontaminated (see Section 2.1.7). In 1992, the weapons production mission was curtailed and the mission transitioned to material stabilization and cleanup with the end of the Cold War.

The current mission of the Rocky Flats Environmental Technology Site is cleanup and closure. At closure, it is anticipated that all nuclear materials and wastes will have been removed from the Site, all buildings will have been demolished, and any remaining contamination will have been remediated per the requirements of RFCA. Current plans call for this mission to be completed late in 2006.

The Plan does not evaluate Rocky Flats' current cleanup and closure mission, nor does it replace or regulate any requirement for environmental documentation of the current clean-up and closure mission at Rocky Flats.

## Existing Natural Resources Management Policy

The Plan implements and is consistent with the 1998 NRMP, which establishes natural resource policies for numerous issues important to the management of the Rocky Flats Buffer Zone. The policies set forth in the NRMP serve to guide selection and funding of Buffer Zone management activities while the Site is being cleaned up under the Rocky Flats Cleanup Agreement (RFCA). The NRMP was developed to reach a milestone under RFCA, and is designed to guide natural resource policy decisions in accordance with closure activities. The Site revises the document as necessary. The Site will discuss any proposed revisions in a public meeting process to provide opportunities for comments.

The open space cleanup objective expressed in the RFCA Vision serves as the foundation for the resource management policies enumerated in the NRMP. This vision anticipates that the Site will be cleaned up so that it can be used as open space or converted to other appropriate uses consistent with community preferences. DOE will manage resources during cleanup in order to preserve currently available options for Buffer Zone use, so that these options can be considered during post-closure resource management discussions.

## Partnerships

This document was prepared in partnership and cooperation by the DOE and the Service. These agencies are cooperating in accordance with the Interagency Agreement (Appendix 1) implemented in 1999 upon establishment of the Rock Creek Reserve. Responsibilities are outlined in Section B, Part IV of the Interagency Agreement. The Colorado Division of Wildlife (DOW) and stakeholders provided recommendations and technical expertise for this Plan. Some of the stakeholders and their roles include:

- **Natural Resource Trustees** - CERCLA section 104(b)(2) provides for government agencies to represent the citizens of the United States in protecting natural resources from releases of contaminants. Natural Resource Trustees at the Site include, at the federal level: the Secretary of Energy, Secretary of the Interior, and at the State level: the Deputy Director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, the Executive Director of Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and the Attorney General of the State of Colorado.
- **Rocky Flats Coalition of Local Governments** - formed in 1999 upon the sunset of the Rocky Flats Local Impacts Initiative, is made up of representatives of the cities and counties contiguous to Rocky Flats. The member governments are City of Arvada, City of Broomfield, City of Westminster, City of Boulder, Town of Superior, Jefferson County and Boulder County. The Coalition holds monthly meetings, open to the general public, to explore and discuss Rocky Flats cleanup, closure, and stewardship issues from a local government standpoint.
- **Rocky Flats Local Impacts Initiative** - operated from 1991 through March 1999 and funded by DOE, this organization represented and served as a focal point for the views and concerns of about 60 organizations, including businesses and environmental, academic and citizen groups. It also advised DOE on the impact of workforce restructuring on local communities and managed several DOE-funded programs to help mitigate the impact of downsizing on these communities.
- **Rocky Flats Citizens Advisory Board** - this board was formed in 1993 to provide informed, community-based recommendations to EPA, the State, and DOE on the cleanup of Rocky Flats. The

board consists of up to 30 volunteers, including local citizens, businesspersons, Rocky Flats workforce personnel, representatives of local governments, regulators, academia, and public interest and environmental organizations.

- **County governments** - Rocky Flats is located almost entirely within Jefferson County (39 acres are within Boulder County), along the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Jefferson County has been informed about activities involving land use planning at RFETS, and planning and zoning for adjacent mining operations. Boulder County, which borders the Site on the north, has also taken increased interest in cleanup and closure, weed control, and land use planning.
- **Local Communities** - because they are located near Rocky Flats and could be affected by its cleanup and closure activities, cities such as Arvada, Broomfield and Westminster provide input to regulators, DOE, and the contractor on cleanup and closure issues. The Cities of Broomfield, Westminster, Arvada and Boulder (as well as Jefferson and Boulder Counties) own open-space lands near Rocky Flats. Land use planning coordination and cooperation among local open space owners is essential.
- **Environmental/ activist groups** - organized citizen groups, such as Rocky Mountain Peace and Justice Center and the Sierra Club, have been involved in Rocky Flats issues for years, from conducting antinuclear protests during the Site's production years to taking stands on current cleanup and closure issues.
- **Community groups** - these groups, including the North Jeffco Area Group and Boulder County Open Space have stressed the importance of keeping Rocky Flats as open space to preserve an important corridor from the foothills to Standley Lake.
- **Citizens** – individuals from all walks of life have actively participated in the numerous public processes conducted by the Site and have provided input and feedback on a myriad of Site issues.

## Planned Initiatives

The Plan includes a description of ongoing and planned natural resources programs and projects for Rock Creek Reserve. The most significant proposals within this Plan include:

- expanding Rock Creek Reserve from 800 acres to 1700 acres;
- developing an access and recreation study;
- introducing sensitive native fish and wildlife species, or listed plant species in accordance with approved recovery plans;
- determining current and minimum in-stream flows required for support of sensitive species on Rock Creek;
- conducting contaminants sampling and analysis to support requirements for a possible National Wildlife Refuge designation;
- studying the feasibility of stabilizing the Lindsay Ranch;
- conserving threatened, endangered and sensitive species;
- monitoring vegetation, wildlife, air, and water quality;
- protecting unique natural resources areas;
- enhancing the existing vegetation management program through practices such as prescribed burning to protect native plants, and provide improved wildlife habitat;
- managing habitat for all species of wildlife;
- managing endangered species and their habitats to ensure compliance with the Endangered Species Act;

- preventing soil erosion to protect habitats, wetlands, and water quality;
- providing input and support for an effective, integrated noxious weed management program;
- protecting and conserving wetlands;
- continuing current public education opportunities through guided tours;
- protecting potential cultural resources while conducting natural resources management; and
- using the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to conserve natural resources.

## Plan Implementation Monitoring

The success of the Plan's implementation will be evaluated through continuing monitoring programs. Additional monitoring is proposed within the Plan for those actions that are not covered in the existing monitoring program.

## Costs and Benefits

- **Costs:** Costs for preparation and coordination of the Plan are described in the 1999 Interagency Agreement with the Service (Appendix 1). An annual work plan identifying funding requirements for implementation of the Plan will be submitted through the normal budget process.
- **Rocky Flats Mission Benefits:** Implementation of the Plan will help maintain the quality of lands comprising Rock Creek Reserve. Public trust and cooperation will be enhanced through Rocky Flats' commitment to environmental stewardship and through the Plan's public participation process.
- **Environmental Benefits:** The Plan provides the basis for the conservation and protection of the Rock Creek Reserve. It will help reduce vegetation loss and prevent soil erosion. It will help with the continuation of threatened & endangered species through habitat conservation and enhance native ecosystems through introductions of sensitive native species. This plan supports native species, and manages the removal/suppression of non-native species. It will provide biodiversity conservation.
- **Other Benefits:** Quality of life for the Rocky Flats surrounding community will be improved through the preservation of unique ecological resources for current and future generations. The ecological resources will be conserved for the future ownership and use of the site.